

Wrestling Perspective

• Analysis and Commentary From Two Guys Who Love Professional Wrestling •

Paul J. MacArthur and David Skolnick - Editors

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Welcome To The Premiere Issue of Wrestling Perspective

Thank you for buying the premiere issue of Wrestling Perspective. We hope you find our opinions and commentary on the world OF professional wrestling to be insightful and make you think twice about the topics we examine.

Just like you, we are first and foremost two wrestling fans who grew up loving our sport. Our wrestling education began with the early days of Georgia Championship Wrestling with Gordon Solie and the old WWWF. We decided to do a sheet, not for the money (there is none at this stage), but because we enjoy discussing and debating professional wrestling.

Both of us subscribe to various wrestling periodicals including *The Wrestling Observer Newsletter*, *Matwatch*, *The Pro Wrestling Torch*, *Chokehold*, *Arena Report*, *Tape Update*, *Ringside Reflector* and the various TV Sports publications. We have been greatly influenced by David Meltzer and Steve Beverly to the point that we hope to someday do the same top notch job with our sheet as they do with their publications. We are not their competition as they concentrate on news while we will be strictly analysis and commentary. Rather than being perceived as other sheets' rivals, we hope to be considered a compliment to what they discuss and bring in a different perspective to the sport.

Wrestling Perspective will be a monthly newsletter at \$1.00 per issue. We will be accepting subscriptions at \$1.00 for one issue up to \$3.00 for three issues. Please make checks payable to Paul MacArthur. If you wish to subscribe or want to drop us a line, write us at PO Box 401, Camillus, NY 13031-0401.

Finally, we ask for your help. Without readers we may as well just talk to each other about the sport. Your comments, suggestions, compliments and criticisms will be greatly valued. Starting with the next issue, we hope to have a letters feature as well so please write us on any topic you feel is important in professional wrestling. Also, this seems like a good time to state our letter policy. For a letter to be published, we require you enclose your name and address. If you do not wish your name to be published please let us know and we will withhold it. We reserve the right to edit letters for publication and will not return materials sent to us. If you need a copy for your records, please make one before you send your letter. Once again, thank you for your interest in *Wrestling Perspective* and we hope to receive your comments soon.

Paul J. MacArthur

David Skolnick

About The Editors

David Skolnick is a reporter for a mid-sized northern New York newspaper. A graduate of SUNY Oswego, he has news experience at two newspapers and two radio stations. Dave has been a wrestling fan for 15 years and lists among his favorite wrestlers: Roddy Piper (prior to his recent return), Tully Blanchard, Arn Anderson, The dynamic Duo (Adams & Hernandez), The Original Fabulous Freebirds, Lex Luger, Barry Windham and The Midnight Express.

Paul J. MacArthur is a graduate student at Syracuse University completing his Masters Degree in Media Administration. He received his Bachelor of Arts from SUNY Oswego in Broadcasting/Mass Communications in May 1988. Paul is currently funding the high price of Syracuse University tuition by working as an afternoon announcer for a contemporary jazz station in Syracuse. In 1980 he became addicted to professional wrestling when he saw Tony Atlas military press a man on Georgia Championship Wrestling. His favorite wrestlers include (in alphabetical order): Chris Adams, The Andersons (Gene, Ole and Arn), Brad Armstrong, Tony Atlas, Ric Flair, Magnum T.A., Mil Mascaras, The Midnight Express (Eaton/Lane), Mike Rotunda, Ricky Steamboat and Barry Windham.

This Month's Commentary

By - Paul J. MacArthur and David Skolnick

To Juice or not To Juice... That is The Question

There is nothing quite like the sight of blood during a wrestling match for a hardcore fan. It can turn a mediocre match into an exciting bout. A four-star confrontation can become an all time classic. Although hardcore wrestling fans love the sight of juice trickling out of the foreheads of combatants, is it necessary?

Since Vince McMahon Jr. took over the WWF, juice has all but disappeared from the promotion. It shows up at occasional main events in the house shows and, at times, on Pay-Per-Views. Three of the last four WWF PPVs have had juice, but the Dusty Rhodes incident looked more like an accident than a blade and the No Holds Barred bit was probably a thumb in the nose at the NWA (who was forbidden by Viewer's Choice, Request TV and the Pennsylvania State Athletic Commission from using juice during Halloween Havoc) and a big Bronx cheer to Viewer's Choice as the WWF was getting ready to sever their relationship. No one can say dropping the blade has had a noticeably negative effect on the WWF's popularity, but could Vince abolish the use of juice all together? Would he want to?

On the other end of the spectrum, the National Wrestling Alliance under Dusty Rhodes was like a Red Cross donation center. Ric Flair juiced. Tully Blanchard juiced. Dusty juiced like a fountain. Even jobbers occasionally took out the blade. Then Dusty did the infamous spike in the eye which ended his reign of carnage. One year and several bookers later, the blood policy has evolved to no juice on television, which includes Pay-Per-View. Is the NWA lacking anything by dropping the blade on television?

Ric Flair vs. Terry Funk on Clash IX was one of the most brutal and exciting matches ever seen on television. Yet, there was not a drop of blood spilled by either men. This may have been the exception, rather than the rule, but the lack of blood certainly did not detract from the match at all. Nor did it from the Flair/Steamboat confrontations. Two completely different types of matches, neither one with juice, and they were two of the most exciting matchups in 1989.

There are a number of circles who are complaining about the lack of blood in the current NWA. They want old rough and tough Magnum spiking Tully. There is a certain appeal to this type of match and, on occasion, we believe it would be permissible for the NWA to allow such a match on a Pay-Per-View, but there is a problem. The distributors (VC and RTV) don't want blood on their PPVs, at least on their NWA PPVs. If the distributor will cut you off for juicing, you would be a fool to juice on the PPV. It may not be fair and there is no justification for it when you consider these companies carry Friday the 13th Part VII and Halloween IV without batting an eye. They have the ball, however, so it makes sense to play by their rules.

Wrestling diehards have compared juicing in wrestling to boxing and stated that if its acceptable for boxers to be cut and have a fist repeatedly thrown into that cut, there is nothing wrong with blading. This is a nice analogy. A flawed one. In boxing, two pugilists are competing to determine the winner of a physical confrontation. It is a legitimate fight and ends by legitimate knockout, TKO or by the judges decision. In wrestling, the outcomes are known and the cuts are self-inflicted with a razor blade. In boxing, the cuts are the result of the confrontation. In wrestling, the cuts are the result of a promoter's wishes. There is simply no comparison.

When discussing juicing, few hardcores bring up the potential health risks involved. During a double juice confrontation, the potential for blood to be shared between the two wrestlers is present. Such a situation could lead to the transmission of hepatitis or AIDS. While no wrestlers have come forward publicly and said they have AIDS, the potential for transmission exists. The chance of hepatitis transmission tremendous when a dirty ring is used. How many times have you seen a small independent use a dirty ring? Is such a health risk, one that could put a wrestler out for 6-12 weeks with hepatitis or for life with AIDS, worth the sight of blood coming out a wrestler's forehead?

We enjoyed Magnum vs. Tully, the original Sheik, the UWF and Dusty's hardcore angles involving juice, but times change. Much of today's wrestling audience, particularly parents are finding juice less and less acceptable. Given the potential health risks, the lack of acceptability in the PPV circles and the change in the wrestling demographics, it appears that juice may become a thing of the past. We are ambivalent about such a change, but looking at the big picture, we realize it would be a positive one.

Video Tape Review

By - Paul J. MacArthur

#303 Japan #36 April/May 1986

Impressive title, eh? Well if the title doesn't get you excited the action on this tape should. That is unless you're eagerly awaiting Hulkamania Volume 36. #303 Japan #36 April/May 1986 is a collection of the New Japan, All Japan and World Pro television shows aired in Japan during the Spring of 1986. This is a third generation dub from 1/2 inch VHS tape, so don't expect the picture quality you would get from Turner Home Entertainment. The picture is certainly watchable, some things just aren't as sharp as one might like, but I liken that to listening to old be bop or Motown records. The quality may bug you at first, but you get used to it pretty quick and, before you know it, you're enjoying the performance. Then there's the action... this is top notch stuff. Say what you will about the Japanese style of wrestling, these guys put on a great show. The tape starts out with a fantastic five man elimination match ala Survivor Series with stars like Inoki, Fujinami, Takada and Maeda. From there we are treated to Choshu and Tiger Mask, DiBiase vs. Tenryu, Hansen vs. Tsurata and to top it off, American action on the World Pro Show featuring Magnum T.A. vs. Ric Flair in an excellent match that never aired in the states. Terry

"Pre-Rooster" Taylor gets it on with Jake "Pre-Damien" Roberts from the UWF days and The Fabulous Ones brawl with The Rock and Roll Express. This is a fantastic tape, six hours including some hysterical Japanese commercials, which brings the total amount of wrestling material to somewhere in the neighborhood of five hours. One final note, all commentary is in Japanese. *Highly Recommended.*

#303 Japan #36 April/May 1986 is available from Brian Tramel, 1806 Self Circle/ Apt B, Jonesboro, AR 72401 for \$16.00.

It's Not The Size, It's What You Do With It That Counts...

By - David Skolnick

The pressure to be bigger and better has led to the emergence of increased steroid use and abuse among professional wrestlers.

We're not here to judge wrestlers who obviously abuse steroids, or to warn them of the health problems they have or will encounter, but to examine the adverse effects the drug has had on wrestling. Comparing today's wrestlers with those of years gone by clearly shows, that just as in other sports, most notably football, steroids have come into vogue over the past few years.

Look at the size of The Ultimate Warrior, Dino Bravo, Lex Luger, Steve Williams and Sid Vicious. These "supermen" have become the dominant wrestlers since the promoters feel they sell better than the junior heavyweights.

The pushes the monsters get are at the expense of these junior heavyweights, who are excellent wrestlers, but aren't carved out of granite. Wrestlers like Ricky Rice, Hector Guerro, Bill Dundee, Brad Armstrong, Jim Brunzell, among others, can no longer be considered main eventers and, if they are still working, are top jobbers or are in small promotions. Even the few exceptions, including The Great Muta, Owen Hart and Brian Pillman, have to be phenomenal athletes with incredible moves to even be considered for a main event.

Steroids have all but killed the junior heavyweight division to the point that the WWF, NWA and AWA no longer have a light heavyweight champion and a great small wrestler cannot get over with today's fans. The number of those who would rather see Vicious or the Warrior clothesline an opponent far outdistance fans who enjoy watching the grace and wrestling excellence of Tim Horner or Brad Armstrong.

Although the wrestlers who use steroids are at fault, it is really the promoters who should be blamed for this situation. Why should a hard working wrestler who is being ignored, not use steroids to bulk up so the promoters will notice him? It seems as though it's easier to use steroids and forget about wrestling than it is to train and build up endurance. The Warrior didn't want to learn wrestling holds when he worked for Bill Watts a few years ago, and instead of listening to Watts, he became a superstar by abusing steroids.

During the 1960's and 1970's, it was not uncommon to witness a 60 minute confrontation. Today, with steroid abuse, it is a rare treat for fans to watch two wrestlers go at it for an hour and still be in good enough shape to do it again.

Steroids have robbed fans of great matches. Instead of Mil Mascaras, Dory Funk Jr. and Jack Brisco, we get The Ultimate Warrior, Sid Vicious and Hulk Hogan. These wrestlers can barely go 20 minutes without passing out and the fans are suffering from this serious lack of conditioning.

Wrestlers starting out today look at the monsters and realize, to make it big in wrestling, they have to bulk up and worry about wrestling later. Some big men, most notably Lex Luger and Sting, took the time to actually learn wrestling once they broke into the sport and now blend size and skill. However, most other "supermen" never bothered to do so and it shows in their performance.

If young wrestlers are going to use steroids, they must also learn how to wrestle or the next card you attend will feature a line-up of 280-pound-plus wrestlers stumbling all over each other trying to deliver clotheslines and fans will only have fond memories of a Brunzell dropkick or a Great Muta moonsault.

Arsenio Hall, The NWA and Marketing

By - Paul J. MacArthur

The January 15, 1990 issue of *The Observer* had a little piece on the NWA and Arsenio Hall worth exploring. The article stated that, contrary to popular belief, the NWA has been approached by Arsenio Hall's people on several occasions to arrange for wrestlers to appear as guests on his show. Common sense would tell you that the NWA would jump at the chance to have their wrestlers get the exposure Arsenio's show can provide. Common sense is a misnomer however, and the NWA demonstrated they had very little by rejecting the offer. This issue raises a number of questions about the NWA and how it intends to become a successful organization. It also suggests the NWA is content to remain the number two player in the game.

Initially, Hall's people contacted WTBS to arrange the guest appearances. They were told no. The reason for this is Arsenio appears as a syndicated program on a number of stations that are in competition with WTBS and by allowing their people on a competitor's station, they would be hurting themselves. Taking this logic to its conclusion, Larry King, a CNN employee, will no longer be allowed to appear on David Letterman or any other program on a competing network. Pat Buchanan and Fred Barnes will give up appearing on The McLaughlin Group and Michael Kinsley will no longer be the moderator for Firing Line. Additionally, Larry King will probably have to quit his radio show because he is working for a competing medium since his audience could be tuned to CNN, CNN II, WTBS or TNT. Kinsley, Buchanan and Barnes will be forced to give up their various columns and publications because they are contributing to a competing medium and the NWA wrestlers will no longer be allowed to appear on World Wide Wrestling or NWA Pro because these programs appear on WTBS competitors as well. If this is the type of faulty logic that transcends the TBS organization it's not surprising the NWA couldn't draw with Flair/Steamboat or Flair/Funk.

After having no success with TBS, Hall's people went to WCW and were told no. In their infinite wisdom, WCW said NWA wrestlers would not appear on the program because Hall has had WWF wrestlers on in the past. Does this mean Larry King is no longer allowed to work for CNN because he has had Vince McMahon on his radio show? For that matter, Arn Anderson, Terry Funk and Mike Rotunda should be forbidden from appearing on the NWA programs because they not only appeared in WWF rings, but on their weekly television programs, NBC specials and Pay-Per-Views. There are severe problems within an organization that uses this type of logic to rationalize their own lack of initiative. One must wonder if the NWA really desires to give their wrestlers the proper exposure necessary to become a major competitor.

The advantages of NWA wrestlers appearing on The Arsenio Hall Show should be obvious, but to really understand how inept the NWA is acting on this issue, consider Arsenio's success. Since its debut in January, The Arsenio Hall Show has become the number two late night talk show on television appearing on 167 television stations,

including some superstations that cross many markets. It trails only Carson in late night ratings. In the under 35 age group, Arsenio is number one (Broadcasting, December 25, 1989); number one in the age group the NWA is so desperate to reach, the age group the NWA should reach and build a long-term following upon. In the NWA's eyes, politics are apparently, more important than long term success.

The appearance of Ric Flair, The Freebirds or The Steiner Brothers on Arsenio Hall has so much potential it's painful to watch the NWA blow this opportunity out the window. Hall, himself, reportedly prefers the NWA because of its superior workrate. The host of the second most popular late-night talk show prefers the NWA's product and the NWA doesn't have time to bother because the other guys were there first. The NWA must wake up, call Arsenio's people and get Ric Flair on the show. Bring in a highlight tape of Flair/Steamboat, Flair/Funk and Flair/Muta and show it to the audience. Let the man talk. It may take a little while, but put him on and he'll get over. Throw on the Steiners and show Scott's Frankensteiner and blockbuster suplex. Show Rick doing a belly-to-belly and a Steinerline. Rick's act would naturally go over with Hall's audience. The Freebirds and Jim Cornette would be naturals to agitate the crowd. If Hall's audience sees what the NWA has to offer, they'll want to take a second look and that should be all the NWA needs. Provided, that is, the NWA wants to work out its other marketing problems. Judging by their attitude towards Arsenio Hall, one can only wonder.

The NWA, regrettably, has taken the position that they don't need the exposure Arsenio Hall can provide. This decision is ridden with poor logic and political nonsense. Maybe one day they will realize appearances on competing networks serve to enhance their wrestlers' marketability and does very little to detract from Turner's four networks. We hope that day comes soon, as one day Arsenio may decide he doesn't want the NWA and then it will be too late. There is an old saying in business circles: "Running a business without advertising is like winking at a girl in the dark. You know what you're doing, but no one else does." The NWA is doing a lot of winking, but the room is dimly lit.

Thanks again for reading *Wrestling Perspective*. Next month we'll have more commentary including: Video Tape Review, Paul looks at PPV, your letters and more. Hope to see you in a month.

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